

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley

Office of the Governor

1205 Pendleton Street

Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

I am writing this letter to you as a concerned citizen of Clarendon County School District 3. I want to take this time to express my gratitude for your strong leadership of our great state of South Carolina.

The purpose of this letter is to express the dire need for funding in Clarendon School District 3. CSD3 currently ranks in the top 5 schools in the state for test scores and overall performance. Our district has received numerous awards and achievements, yet we remain the 2nd lowest funded school district in the state. Ironically, in CSD3, we are the 8th highest taxed school district in the state based on millage rate. As compared to the other 2 districts in Clarendon County, we pay 3-4 times more property taxes in District 3 as citizens pay in Districts 1 and 2. Yet our school (per child) funding is up to 4 times lower. Assessed funding value per child in CSD3 is approximately \$7,000 per year, in District 2-\$18,000 per child per year, and in District 1-\$39,000 per child per year.

Our students have not benefited from art or music in our district for over 5 years. I am sure you know how valuable and beneficial these programs are to our children. Numerous studies show that children exposed to art and music in schools both behave better in class and perform better on tests.

CSD3 has made cut after cut to try and meet budget yearly while District 1 and District 2 enjoy the finest of facilities, iPads, marching band, art, music, and drama programs. Unfortunately, the students in CSD3 go without ALL of these things. Our girls' softball team won the State Championship 2 years ago and played for the championship this past year. Yet, our softball fields and sporting facilities are not adequate to support these types of events.

CSD3 manages to outperform Districts 1 and 2 in test scores and overall performance as well as many other areas despite these cuts and GROSS underfunding. This not only sends the wrong message to our taxpayers, but MOST of all, our students. The message being sent should be Hard Work + Dedicated Faculty = Success and Rewards. Instead, the exact opposite message is being sent.

Recently, our school board proposed to change the language regarding the use of 1% sales tax. The current language allow for the excess money (after school debt has been paid down) to be used for land purchases, building construction, and renovations. CSD3 asked for the language to be changed slightly in order for the money to be used for operating expenses as well. We also asked for a larger portion of the money. We hoped this extra money would aid us in operations cost (we have been using our reserves for operations cost) as well as improvements to our school.

We did this in effort as NOT to raise/add any additional taxes to the citizens of Clarendon County and not to financially harm the other school districts in Clarendon County either. However, County Council (who has the sole power to change the language) as well as Districts 1 and 2 are not interested in giving us the ability to use our funds we so desperately need and have requested.

I am pleading as a heavily taxed citizen of the county, that you intervene and help us find a solution to our situation here in CSD3. The children of CSD3 MATTER!!! We want equal funding for our school district.

Thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra B. Driggers". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Debra" being the most prominent part of the signature.

Debra B. Driggers